DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 821 CS 211 677

AUTHOR Kantz, Margaret
TITLE Written Rhetorical Syntheses: Processes and Products. Technical Report No. 17.
INSTITUTION Center for the Study of Writing, Berkeley, CA.; Center for the Study of Writing, Pittsburgh, PA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jan 89
NOTE 30p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Creative Writing; Discourse Analysis; Higher Education; Models; Protocol Analysis; Rhetorical Invention; *Synthesis; Undergraduate Students; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Purpose (Composition); Rhetorical Stance; Writing Models; *Writing Tasks

ABSTRACT

When students write syntheses in response to a rhetorical task, does the rhetorical nature of the task exert some special influence on the students' composing processes? How do these processes differ? Three case studies, quantitative analyses of papers written by seventeen undergraduates, and a tentative model of a synthesizing process address these and other questions. The case studies of three students reading a packet of eight sources and writing their papers in a read-aloud, think-aloud protocol condition, illustrate striking differences in composing process and essay quality. Differences in essay quality seem less related to the differences in composing process than to decisions the writers made about how to present the source materials to the readers. Quantitative analyses of 17 essays showed that high quality was related to the presence of a high proportion of original ideas and not to relatively mechanical matters such as citing sources. Results suggest that synthesizing is a process of decisions which can be made in different combinations and different orders. Writers of the most successful essays in this study defined the problem as requiring original thought about the topic and sources, set rhetorical goals that required interpretation (not reproduction) of sources, and used their reading time to select source material and plan its use. Results also suggest that having a rhetorically structured task may have helped students to write better papers than they might have written without such guidelines. (Included are: two figures; three appendixes containing source texts, the writing task, and student essays; and 13 references.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED303821

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Margaret Kantz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Technical Report No. 17

WRITTEN RHETORICAL SYNTHESES: PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS

Margaret Kantz

January, 1989

University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

The project presented, or reported herein, was performed pursuant to a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement/Department of Education (OERI/ED) for the Center for the Study of Writing. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the OERI/ED and no official endorsement by the OERI/ED should be inferred.

CS211617

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING

Director	Sarah Warshauer Freedman University of California, Berkeley	
Co-Directors	Linda Flower Carnegie Mellon University	J.R. Hayes Carnegie Mellon University
	James Gray University of California, Berkeley	
Academic Coordinator	Sandra Schecter University of California, Berkeley	
Editor	Melanie Sperling University of California, Berkeley	

Publication Review Board

Chair	Kay Losey Fraser University of California, Berkeley	
Assistant Chairs	Carol Heller University of California, Berkeley	Victoria Stein and Lorraine Higgins Carnegie Mellon University
Advisors	Charles Fillmore University of California, Berkeley	Jill H. Larkin Carnegie Mellon University

Millie Almy, *University of California, Berkeley*
Carla Asher, *Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York*
Nancie Atwell, *Boothbay Region Elementary School, Boothbay Harbor, ME*
Robert de Beaugrande, *University of Florida*
Ruby Bernstein, *Northgate High School, Walnut Creek, CA*
Lois Bird, *Whole Language Consultant*
Wayne Booth, *University of Chicago*
Robert Calfee, *Stanford University*
Michael Cole, *University of California, San Diego*
Colette Daiute, *Harvard University*
John Daly, *University of Texas, Austin*
Peter Elbow, *State University of New York, Stony Brook*
JoAnne T. Eresh, *Writing and Speaking Center, Pittsburgh, PA*
Donald Graves, *University of New Hampshire*
Robert Gundlach, *Northwestern University*
James Hahn, *Fairfield High School, Fairfield , CA*
Julie Jensen, *University of Texas, Austin*
Andrea Lunsford, *Ohio State University*
Marion M. Mohr, *Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax County, VA*
Lee Odell, *Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*
Charles Read, *University of Wisconsin*
Victor Rentel, *Ohio State University*
Michael W. Stubbs, *University of London*
Deborah Tannen, *Georgetown University*
Henry Trueba, *University of California, Santa Barbara*
Gordon Wells, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*

WRITTEN RHETORICAL SYNTHESES: PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS

By

Margaret Kantz
Texas Christian University

Although most freshman writing programs offer instruction in writing research papers (Ford & Perry, 1982), we know very little about how such papers are composed and why they differ in quality. For example, when students write syntheses in response to a rhetorical task, does the rhetorical nature of the task exert some special influence on the students' composing processes? Although research using rhetorical tasks has revealed differences in essay quality related to writing experience (Atlas, 1979) and reading achievement (Spivey, 1984), these studies do not answer this question. Other questions to which we do not have answers include: When students with similar academic achievement levels write a researched synthesis, how do their composing processes differ? Are composing processes so similar that one can speak of a generic "synthesizing process," or do many different processes appear? What different kinds of decisions do students make about how to do the task, and how do these decisions affect the quality of their essays? Finally, how do successful rhetorical syntheses differ from less successful syntheses, and how are these differences related to differences in composing process? This paper offers three case studies, quantitative analyses of papers written by seventeen undergraduates, and a tentative model of a synthesizing process as partial answers to these questions.

COMPOSING PROCESSES OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL SYNTHESIZERS

The case studies of three students, Dan, Sam and Pat, who wrote syntheses in response to a rhetorical problem task, offer insights into the different ways that students create written syntheses. Dan, Sam and Pat (the names are fictitious) were part of a group of seventeen undergraduates who participated in a study of synthesizing process (Kantz, 1987a); they, along with five other students, read a packet of eight sources and wrote their papers in a read-aloud, think-aloud protocol condition. (Since the other nine students read the source material as part of a writing course and wrote the essay in a single 1-hour writing session, only the composing processes of the eight protocol-condition students are available for discussion.) Because the subjects, who participated to satisfy a course requirement, were all full-time students in good standing at a selective private university, they were considered to have roughly similar academic skills. The topic, creative writing, was chosen as an "issues"-type topic that could elicit complex treatments of the sources (beyond simple "pro-con" responses) and which did not draw on a body of factual knowledge. The source texts (see Appendix A), which gave advice about writing, were written for various audiences; their advice overlapped and occasionally conflicted, and did not directly relate to the rhetorical problem. The writing task (given in Appendix B) asked the writers to use the best ideas from the sources to explain to a group of engineering students how to write creatively.

The three case studies illustrate striking differences in composing process and essay quality. The differences in essay quality do not, however, seem obviously related to the differences in composing process; instead, they seem related more to decisions that the writers made about what kind of paper to write, especially how to present the source materials to the readers.

In the discussion, the term "rhetorical stance" appears from time to time. This term, which is discussed in Kantz, 1987a, and Kantz, 1987b, is taken from Booth (1963), and refers to the balance of topic material with emotional and ethical proof in an essay. It is used here to mean the role that the writer has assumed vis-a-vis the readers; this role (e.g., summarizer, explicator) determines how the writer will present the source material and how he or she will use original ideas to bridge the rhetorical gap between readers and sources.

Case Study of Dan

Dan, a sophomore with a double major in creative/professional writing and theatre arts, was recommended to the experimenter as an exceptionally able student. He wrote a poor essay, however, apparently because he generated inappropriate and conflicting goals involving the organization and development of his essay and the presentation of source material, and because he did not begin to select material or plan his essay until after he had read the sources. Apparently as a result, Dan wrote his paper as a set of source summaries, presenting his original ideas as though they came from papers by other writers.

Dan felt distanced from his audience and unsure that he could talk to them about creativity. In a tape recorded interview done immediately after he finished writing the essay, he said:

> I realized that a title would be something which would be very snappy for a handout to do for people - people meaning in this case - college students who have - I don't want to say short attention span - but who have a tendency not to really read and absorb that which doesn't appear to be too interesting - This, once again, is my opinion - But I think it holds true in a lot of cases . . . So, I just wrote at the top, "Handout on how to be creative," since this in a sense this was what it was - Although I realize that was sort of - You know, a weird type of irony, because being creative is really an individual process and it's very hard, I imagine, to show somebody how to be creative. (Cued Recall, pp. 12 - 13)

These feelings appear in Dan's protocol, for example, as he thought about the title:

"There's no originality in creativity - Or something like that - How to be creative like everybody else - Tell everybody else how everybody else is creative." (Writing 4.4)

This attitude apparently caused Dan to set two goals for himself that were inconsistent with writing a good paper: During his only reference back to the task after reading the sources, Dan decided to write briefly and without a plan for organizing his ideas:

> Actually, you know, the handout doesn't have to be in any type of real structure - It should be short because, you know, these people have to read the damn thing and understand what you're talking about - So, it should also be clear - I don't think it has to be in any particular order, because I'm not going to say that some of these points are more important than others. (Writing 3.1)

A look at the first paragraph of Dan's essay (given in Appendix C) will illustrate the effect of this decision for his treatment of Vonnegut's advice (summarized in Appendix A). Although the paragraph lists Vonnegut's main points, in the context of the

rhetorical problem it lacks coherence. The second sentence assumes that the reader has made considerable progress with the writing task since reading the first sentence; the fourth and fifth sentences offer conflicting advice, and the sixth sentence repeats the first sentence.

Because Dan summarized each source in turn, he could not restructure the advice to allow for overlaps and contradictions. When asked why he had formatted the essay so that each paragraph appeared to summarize a different source, Dan said:

> That was deliberate in that in citing my sources I - Well - A lot of the points are actually interwoven between the various texts and I just decided to give it to one of the particular authors so I could save myself the trouble of writing various excerpted from so and so several times . . . Once again, all the points - With the exception of two or three, which probably would become sort of obvious - And oftentimes were in quotes - Such as bull and cow - Which I didn't make up - For the most part everything else could very easily have come from myself without reading the articles - And so it was only out of courtesy that I even included the "excerpted from" because it was required in the task. (Cued Recall, pp. 23-24)

Paradoxically, the decision to write an unstructured paper meant that Dan's writing was weakest when he summarized a source that contained lists of advice or obviously relevant main ideas (e.g., Vonnegut), and strongest when he had to extrapolate or invent advice for sources that did not contain such material (Leo, Kerouac, and Swift). When Dan had to invent material, for example on handling writer's block (12 of the 13 ideas in that section were judged by raters to be original), he wrote coherent, interesting prose. Yet his decision to summarize meant that, to maintain his rhetorical distance, he had to present these ideas as coming from the sources. The result for his essay is an inconsistent rhetorical distance: In places the essay reads like a detached summary; in other places it offers a more engaged and coherent instruction presented as summary.

As he wrote the paper, Dan changed his mind about having no structure; after finishing it, he believed that he had arranged the source summaries in an order corresponding to how someone would write a creative journal entry:

> From there, compose a rough draft in which I determine that the first thing - that the three stages you want to do is find a topic, then write everything down, not worry about revising, and then finally, going back and revising it, the final touches. (Cued Recall, p. 3)

In two other places during the interview, as well as late in the writing protocol, Dan expressed his intention to use an order corresponding to how someone would write a journal entry. The order is not apparent in the essay, however, and Dan did not explain anywhere that it existed. Apparently his readers were supposed to figure it out for themselves.

One reason why Dan's plans for organizing his essay seem mismatched may have been his low opinion of his audience: If a writer feels that his readers have short attention spans and lack an ability (creativity) that he values in himself and feels is unique for each person, he may well experience difficulty in planning how to communicate with them.

Dan's difficulties with the audience and topic may also have affected his reading process. During his reading protocol, Dan did very little planning. He did not select source material to use, nor did he use any of the many personal and evaluative ideas that

he generated during his more than 10,000-word reading protocol. He took two notes from Leo's article and used both in the paper: The first is, "no distractions - if start something, then finish it." The second is

> If the symptoms of writer's block persist, then do not, I repeat DO **NOT**, follow the above procedure. Instead, face your fear head on. **NO DISTRACTIONS ALLOWED**. Once you start something, you must finish it. There will always be the chance for revision later.

For comparison, here is a typical comment from Dan's reading of Vonnegut's article:

> Now - After taking Reading Twentieth-Century Cultures, I might be tempted to consider the underlying assumptions here - We just had a paper on that, for one thing - But, you know - Why get into that - Time is money . . . I don't see anything wrong with scribbling your thoughts all over the place, any which way, as Vonnegut said, in your notes--as long as when you write them in an orderly fashion for other people to read, it is an orderly fashion. (Vonnegut, pp. 3 - 4)

Clearly, Dan had many ideas that he could have shared with his readers, had he wished to do so. He was aware of having readers, but he seems to have preferred not to talk to them. Instead, he read through the sources, commenting on whatever interested him and taking three pages of notes that he discarded, and then he began thinking about writing the paper. He performed the experimental task as two discrete tasks--a reading task and a writing task. He looked for--and found--a simple way to do each task. His mismatched goals for organization and rhetorical distance led him to write a paper which presented its most original material as coming from a source--on the wrong topic.

Case Study of Sam

Sam, a freshman engineering student who was enrolled in the freshman writing course, used the sources in his essay to try to persuade his readers that by following a logical process, they could find creative writing easy and fun to do (Sam's essay is given in Appendix C). Sam's writing protocol offers a clear example of a writer using a rhetorical problem to gain a rhetorical perspective on the sources. By gaining this rhetorical power, Sam was able to use the sources to create an original argument.

One could summarize Sam's writing protocol by saying that he reviewed the sources, taking two sets of notes; he made a developed outline; he wrote the paper; and that he took four hours (divided into two sessions) to restudy the source material, write the outline, and write the draft. As he reviewed the source packet, Sam looked for material that he liked, talking to himself about what it meant. When a text allowed him to list points without rethinking them (e.g. Vonnegut) he did so, but whenever a text presented some difficulty, he interpreted it in light of the task and his own beliefs and practices. Sam's composing process thus looks like what one would expect from a relatively unsophisticated writer.

What makes Sam's protocol interesting is that whenever he had a difficulty or reached a transitional point in his work, he returned to the task and thought about his audience. This rhetorical thinking had important consequences for Sam's treatment of the source material. Sam returned to the task:

- after jettisoning his first set of notes, before he reviewed the sources;
- when he disagreed with a text and wasn't sure whether to use what it said or to say what he believed;
- when he began his outline; and
- at the beginning of his second writing session, before finishing the outline.

Each time, Sam used his image of the audience to make decisions about the paper. The first time, considering his readers' needs and knowledge led him to a decision about his stance toward the source material:

> Okay - If I've got to write a handout - I'm supposed to find the information that will (quote, unquote) "help" them - And so it is really my decision, what I think, is the information from these that will help them - They've got the same data I've got - And they're asking my opinion - So, I'm going to give them the information that is going to help them write a good paper - Take what I think is good from all of these, and turn it into a paper. (Writing 1.1)

In this comment Sam took a small but crucial step: he paraphrased the task as a rhetorical imperative that allowed him to assert control over the material. He did not say, "I have to tell people what's in these sources." Instead, he set himself two goals, to select and to transform the material. In his second reference to the task Sam confirmed and expanded his stance toward the source material (Perry's essay):

> Huh - The interesting [thing] here - I disagree with that one hundred percent - Okay - I disagree with that - What do I do?
> I look at my task - My task is to write a handout - I've been given a job - So, obviously they have some - some confidence in my ability to read this and analyze it - So, I'm going to analyze it the way I see it, and I'm going to write it the way I see it - And I don't agree with it - So, I am not going to put that down. (Writing 3.3)

This review of the task situation gave Sam the confidence to ignore the part of Perry's argument that he disliked, use what he liked, and say what he thought to be true about Perry's concepts of cow and bull. As a result, he did not use Perry's concepts, did not mention him in the essay, and gave advice that disagreed with Perry's. In his essay overall, Sam gave his own ideas priority and used the sources as support for them.

In his third review of the task, Sam began thinking about the implications of the task situation for his format and length. (Since the planning segment is so long, it is summarized here.) For the first time, Sam realized that his audience's history and needs meant that he did not need to write an essay. After a brief struggle with a tentative opening sentence, he began thinking about using an approaches-procedures structure and how his sources would fit into such a structure. Suddenly realizing that one possible approach was irrelevant to his readers' needs ("I don't think that's what they want"), he simplified the task ("I'm just gonna give them the approach") and began writing.

In the fourth review of the task, Sam confirmed his earlier decisions and decided that his job as a writer was to interpret the source material for his readers (task instructions are underlined):

> What is the task again? <u>Write a handout</u> - This is [a] handout - This should not be too long if I want it to be a handout - Students don't want to read through another five pages of stuff to be equally as confused - <u>Do cite sources</u> - Okay - Here we go.

Okay - How would I write this if I was writing a handout - I feel like I'm kinda tied in to writing an essay - Okay - Here are these science, comp. sci., EE's, EE students - All these science majors, who all of a sudden have to do creative writing - And they get all these packets with creative writing - And they can't understand it - So, I need to be a stepping stone between the strict - strict technical interpretation of things and the way of doing things - Between that and the - the these creative writers, which they can't understand - But I don't want them to think the whole idea is to get them to write creatively - so we can't just go all the other directions so they understand it and then don't do it.

So, I've got to be kinda middle of the road on this. If I was writing for these students, and I wanted to be middle of the road, I think I would simply come in and turn this into a very straightforward thing, and not write it so essay-like - I think they've got enough essay stuff here - They want a handout - So, here we go - I'm going to do it just this way - Introduction
INTRODUCTION:
----What the heck! They can't fail me on this - All right - Introduction. (Writing 7.1-2)

In this review of the task, Sam again considered the implications for him of his readers' earlier engagements with the sources. He could not commit the same errors as his sources--presumably writing at length and being too creative. On the other hand, he could not be so terse that his readers would not be able to follow his instructions. This appeal to the task allowed him, finally, to override his apparent discomfort with a non-essay format and to write what he knew was needed rather than what he found easiest to do.

The most striking difference between Sam's composing process and Dan's is that Sam's concern for the rhetorical demands of the task led him to use the task as a touchstone for testing his responses to the texts and his basic composing decisions. Dan made no such tests and used personal convenience as the basis for many of his decisions. For example, in his taped interview, he stated that he had used his personal note-taking format for the essay format. Sam's repeated tests during his review of the sources look like efforts to plan the paper. Dan's reading protocol contains no such planning. The apparent result for their essays was that raters who looked at specific analytic traits, such as developing ideas and giving advice in a procedural form that readers could use, gave Sam's essay much higher marks than Dan's.

Case Study of Pat

Pat, a sophomore in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, wrote the second highest-rated essay in the study. Her composing process is of interest because it was not what one might expect from a successful synthesizer: Like Dan, she *seemed* to ignore the rhetorical demands of the task as she wrote. Unlike Dan and Sam, she wrote 60% of her essay content as she read the sources. After she had read the sources and written her text segments (they are too long to be called "notes"), she organized the text segments into an outline and wrote her paper (see Appendix C).

In her reading protocol, Pat wrote down her responses to the sources. These responses ultimately formed the bulk of her essay. For example, her notes from page 2 of Macrorie's text were:

(2) Don't censor => for example don't dismiss a childlike tendency [to] in order to sound [concise and] well thought out. Those first reactions like noticing 'rice krispies as doing a dead man's float' rather than 'rice krispies are soggy.' Try to illustrate your ideas with active images.

A quick check in Appendix C will show that Pat used these notes virtually word for word in her essay and that she used them in the context of an original point, the candid description of feelings as a source of creativity. This data suggests a writer who moved steadily and purposefully through the sources, letting them stimulate her thoughts and taking meticulous notes of the ideas being stimulated, and who then more or less transcribed these writings into the essay.

The active, critical reading behavior exhibited in Pat's reading protocol is not of a kind that the literature predicts. She did not interact systematically with the authors, discuss her responses to the texts, or do other kinds of commenting predicted by the literature (cf. Kennedy, 1985). Since Pat's notes were generated virtually without commentary or overt decision-making, much of her composing activity occurred in a form that her protocol did not capture. Her note on Macrorie suggests a responsive review-and-comment strategy: Pat apparently seized on points that interested her and elaborated on them, without referring to the task or the rhetorical situation and without planning the essay. She seems to have merged her ideas with those in the sources that she liked and to have ignored what she found uncongenial (she used five of the eight sources). Pat, like Kennedy's fluent readers, read her sources "pencil in hand" (p. 451), taking and revising her notes. Like Kennedy's fluent readers, she quoted relatively little, except from Kerouac; unlike Kennedy's subjects, however, she did little rereading of either her notes or of the sources.

This apparently writer-based process allowed Pat to transform the source material, often so that raters did not recognize it. Pat's notes reveal that eleven of the 26 ideas that raters scored as original either came from or were directly stimulated by a source (usually Kerouac or Macrorie).

Like Sam and unlike Dan, Pat apparently assumed that her own values and beliefs offered appropriate responses to the rhetorical problem. In a taped interview given immediately after writing her essay, Pat's comments about her writing suggested that an important part of her process of transforming source material consisted of using her values and goals, as well as her perception of the rhetorical problem, to transform the material to make it say what she thought needed to be said. For example, she explained how she worked with the Macrorie note (her notes are underlined):

> . . . Oh, and I wrote be - graphic drawing a picture - So that would illustrate the feelings and viewpoints that the people had - And I guess basically, I wanted them to make things really vivid - Don't censor - Oh, I got that from - Well, things are more interesting if you have perhaps a childlike voice - And I used the example of the Rice Krispies with the dead man's float, which is more interesting than just Rice Krispies are soggy - So, I kind of summed it up here with Try and illustrate your ideas with active images by not censoring . . . I saw that when I write - Don't be afraid of opening up - People usually tend to censor things, because they don't like to open up, so they should put in personal accounts, which will give you more interesting descriptive words - Similes and metaphors - Oh, here - I thought about how I said up here that you should make the things interesting, so you should create similes and metaphors - And, you know, create your own similes and metaphors. (Cued Recall, pp. 4 - 5)

Pat apparently equated creativity with being vivid and interesting (perhaps in response to the journal article in the task, cf. Appendix B). She appears to have used these values of vividness and interest to guide her choices of source material and her decisions on how to use it. The imperative mode of her notes seems to reflect a decision that her readers needed to be told what to do. Unlike Dan, Pat apparently believed that her readers would share her interest in vivid and interesting language. She used herself as a touchstone (e.g., "I saw that when I write"), assuming that if she shared her values and beliefs with readers, using instructional language, that she could solve the rhetorical problem.

After reading the sources, Pat organized her notes by subsuming them under certain controlling ideas. This technique enabled her to use her materials with great freedom. The following excerpt shows Pat moving rapidly through her notes on three sources (Leo, Perry, Kerouac), arranging the material under controlling ideas of variation and truthfulness (Pat's notes are underlined; source material is italicized):

> . . . Even the most famous writers have blocks - Traditional answers to break writer's block - Change of scenery - Change of work habits - Okay - Then this is like - Writer's block doesn't necessarily have to be a writer's block - It can be on the subject of varying -
> Varying your content and form from day to day
> Let's see - *Examsmanship and Liberal Art* - Getting Information - And then you want - This is more of a focus -
> More focus on information
> And this could go underneath varying your content - Almost as a subgrouping - *Drawing in part from memory or table talk* the point is not quantitative and there really is no formula for - Don't just dwell on - Try to prove you understand - Just show how you can incorporate these ideas and use them - All right - More focus on information - *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose* - Spontaneous writing - Improvisational jazz -
> *Spontaneity of prose
> Which goes in truthful writing . . . (Writing, pp. 6 - 7)

The result of this technique for her essay was that the structure of Pat's draft has no resemblance to the order of her notes. Her essay also seems more coherent than the essays by Dan and Sam.

Finally, Pat used her picture of the rhetorical situation to plan the introduction (language from the task is italicized):

> I want to do an interesting introduction, and since these people are fairly technical, I could set up some kind of introduction that they'll be able to relate to most easily - Let's see - *Write a fairly complete but rough draft* - Well, let's see exactly where the problem is - *They say that according to the teacher, this* - Let's see - *Write a fairly complete but rough draft of the handout. Use the best ideas from the packet in your paper; you need not use footnotes* - Let's see - *The teacher wants us to be creative--but I don't know what he means by 'creative.' I don't know what he means by 'creative.'* So, what is creativity? What is creativity - Creativity encompasses - Well - Creativity is individual so to give you - Creativity is an individual thing, so to give you a step-by-step instruction would be really defeating the purpose - Okay - I'll start like that -
> Creativity is individual and unique . . . (Writing, pp. 8 - 9)

The last lines of this passage show that Pat, like Dan, believed that because creativity is different for each person, step-by-step instructions for being creative could not be written. She solved the apparent impasse by finding a common ground with her readers--using emotion to create original writing.

Pat's case study shows that her rhetorical power over the sources came primarily from her strategy of selecting ideas that appealed to her, elaborating on the ideas using her own values and beliefs, and then ordering the material according to categories that seemed important to her. Of lesser importance, apparently, was the rhetorical situation.

Pat's composing process rearranged the writing and planning stages. Unlike Dan, who read the sources and then planned his paper as he wrote it, Pat used her reading time to generate pieces of text that she thought would be useful in the essay. Unlike Sam, who also wrote an outline, Pat knew when she wrote her outline how she would use most of her materials; Sam made many of these decisions as he created the outline. Like Sam, Pat returned to the task to get ideas for an introduction. Pat largely merged the steps of selecting material, elaborating on it, and using it to generate an argument. At the same time, however, she simplified her task by using only a few sources, by postponing decisions about structure, by using an essay format, by assuming that her readers would share her values and understand her if she just said what she thought, and by subordinating the sources to her own ideas and values.

This condensed process apparently allowed Pat to create a personally believable solution to the rhetorical problem that gave her immediate rhetorical control over the sources, allowing her to use them very selectively to support her own ideas and giving her a way to talk to her readers. It allowed her to work in bite-sized pieces. Never did she have to transform an entire source text, as Dan did in his advice about writer's block, for example, or deal with the sources as a body of information, as Sam and Dan did. Pat did not attempt the relatively large task of presenting the gist of each source to the readers, as Dan did, or the even larger task of explaining each source to the readers, as Sam did. Instead, she selected a small number of ideas, elaborated on them, and synthesized them into an original argument about using emotion to stimulate creativity. Unlike Sam, who in places lapsed from explanation into summary (especially in his presentation of Pattison's advice), Pat maintained her persuasive tone throughout her paper.

The three case studies show that these students did respond to the rhetorical dimensions of the writing task, although in different ways. They made many (sometimes surprising) decisions about their papers, and their composing processes differed. These differences affected their essays. But were these three students unique? How did their papers compare to those written by 14 other students who did the same task?

WRITTEN PRODUCTS OF GOOD SYNTHESIZERS

The case studies, taken with the quantitative analyses of the seventeen essays, suggest some interesting implications for any description of the processes of successful and unsuccessful synthesizers. Specifically, they suggested that judgments of essay quality are related to overall presentation of material, especially the presence of many original ideas and a relative de-emphasis of source material. Essay quality was not related to more mechanical essay traits such as citing sources or using all of the sources.

Description and Results of Quantitative Analyses

The seventeen essays were given general impression ratings for overall quality by three independent raters who were experienced teachers of college-level English, using a 1 (low) to 6 (high) scale. Interrater agreement was acceptable (Spearman-Brown r = .62). (The reason for this low agreement was that although the raters agreed in judging the lowest-rated papers, they disagreed about the highest-rated papers.) The general impression scores ranged from 4 to 15 (possible range = 3 - 18), with a mean of 8.7. Pat's essay was highly rated (12); Sam and Dan's essays were both rated slightly below average (8).

The essays were also rated for seven analytic traits: (a) giving advice relevant for the specific problem of writing creatively; (b) having a definition and discussion of creativity; (c) giving procedural explanations of the advice; (d) consistently developing ideas throughout the paper; (e) blending source material with original ideas; (f) citing sources; and (g) having a problem-solution structure. This list included traits that might be important for any essay, traits that were specific to the writing task, and traits that related to the synthesis genre. The raters for this analysis were also three experienced writing teachers. The raters' agreement (Spearman-Brown r) was .77, and the correlation (Pearson r) between the summed general impression scores and the summed analytic scores was .92. This means that the three general impression raters and the three analytic raters essentially agreed on how the essays compared with one another, even though they were giving different kinds of ratings.

All of the analytic traits except citing sources turned out to be related at the 95% confidence level or higher. A multiple regression showed that all seven traits contributed to the variance in the general impression scores (R^2 = .92). This result means that the six analytic traits relating to choice and presentation of materials were highly related to each other. The low correlation of citing sources with the other traits means that writers of low-rated essays might cite sources clearly and completely, while writers of high-rated essays might neglect to cite their sources. Essay quality was thus apparently related more to choice and presentation of essay content than to citing sources.

Given the scoring scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), the possible range of analytic scores was 21 - 84 (7 traits x three raters). Pat's essay again scored high (68); Sam's also scored high (60). Dan's score of 46 was below the mean of 49. His essay received low marks for defining the key term (creativity), giving procedural advice, developing ideas, and citing sources. Sam also received low marks for defining the key term, but fairly high marks (3's) in the other categories. Pat received high marks in all categories.

To learn whether high-rated essays and low-rated essays would have different proportions of original and source material, the essays were divided into "idea units" (roughly, T units). The ideas were then coded as being "Original" (invented by the writers), "Borrowed" (from a source or from the task), or "Mixed" (a blend of Original and Borrowed material). The three independent raters agreed unanimously on 47% of the 698 ideas and by two out of three on another 45% (92% total). This level of agreement was considered acceptable. Seventy-seven percent of the disagreement involved the Mixed category, i.e., whether an idea was entirely original, partly mixed with source material, entirely a mixture of source material with original material, or entirely borrowed from sources. The raters' inability to agree on the Mixed category suggests that the students did in fact blend source material with their own ideas, as the task implicitly invited them to do.

Higher-rated essays contained higher proportions of Original material than the lower-rated essays, as shown in a medians test; a one-sample chi square showed that this difference was significant ($X^2 = 3.89, df = 1, p < .05$). Conversely, a medians test showed that the higher-rated essays contained a lower proportion of Borrowed material than did the lower-rated essays, although the chi square analysis did not yield a significant result ($X^2 = 3, df = 1, p < .10$). The difference in proportions is very striking in the five highest- and lowest-rated essays: The five highest-rated essays averaged 65% Original ideas and 17% Borrowed ideas; the five lowest-rated essays averaged 33% Original ideas and 47% Borrowed ideas. Pat's essay was 58% Original and 12% Borrowed; Sam's essay was 55% Original and 26% Borrowed; Dan's was 48% Original and 39% Borrowed.

Considered in light of the case studies, these results suggest that writers of high-rated essays, such as Pat, used source material in ways that raters liked and which they did not always recognize as coming from a source, whereas writers of low-rated essays, such as Dan, did more summarizing. Writers of high-rated essays also found many original things to say, whereas writers of low-rated essays did not. In other words, essay quality was related to having something original to say.

Because the task specified that the student audience for these papers had read the sources but not seen their relevance, it seemed likely that highly-rated essays might contain many explanatory comments. Therefore, using a definition of warrants (Toulmin, 1958) as being ideas that explained other ideas, the essays were coded for warrants by the analytic raters, using signal detection techniques (Carey, 1985), with the experimenter as the baseline. Warrants were defined as word clusters (usually clauses) that explained adjacent clauses, usually by answering the implied question "Why?"; they were often signalled by introductory words such as "because" and "so that." Interrater reliability was high (mean hits = . 83, mean false alarms = .05). Essay quality was not related to the percent of warrants, as determined by word counts (Pearson $r = -.25$). (The percent of warrants in Pat's [15%], Sam's [11%], and Dan's [17%] essays was near the mean of 15%.)

This result suggests that warrants were not the same as idea development and procedural advice, traits which contributed to the variance of the general impression scores. The reason might be that the warrant measure did not by itself measure the quality, topical relevance, or rhetorical effect of the explanation; relevance was another analytic trait that correlated highly with essay quality.

Because synthesis quality might have been related to number of sources used or to using particular sources, number and choice of sources were counted, using the Borrowed data from the Original/Mixed/Borrowed analysis. The relevance of the sources for the task was also rated, using two independent instructors of writing (their agreement was highly significant; Pearson $r = .98$). Essay quality was not related to the number of sources used (Pearson $r = .37$, n.s.); in the five highest-rated papers, the number of sources used ranged from one to nine. (Pat used only five sources; Sam and Dan used all nine.) Although certain sources were used by most of the students (Vonnegut = 94%, Macrorie = 76%) and other sources were used by very few students (Leo and Perry both = 24%), no clear pattern of source-use correlating with essay quality appeared. The students disagreed with the instructors about relevance: The instructors rated Perry as the most relevant source; they considered Kerouac (Pat's main source) and Leo as the least relevant. Essay quality appeared to have been related more to how the students used the sources than to which sources or how many sources they used.

To summarize, quantitative analyses of seventeen essays written in response to a writing task which set a rhetorical problem showed clear differences between the higher- and lower-rated essays. High essay quality was related to the presence of a high proportion of original ideas and to a cluster of highly intercorrelated essay traits that dealt with choice and presentation of content. Essay quality was not related to relatively mechanical matters such as citing sources, using all of the sources, using sources considered by experts to be relevant, using many ideas from the sources, or giving many explanations (warrants) for the claims being made.

These results are consistent with earlier research. Atlas (1979) found that experienced writers drew original ideas from a rhetorical situation and tried to tailor their writing to a specific reader, whereas freshmen were content to use source material without such rhetorical adaptation. Spivey (1983) related reading achievement to the ability to restructure source material into large, coherent units in a written syntheses. Kennedy (1985) also related successful synthesizing to reading ability.

COMPOSING PROCESS AND ESSAY QUALITY

Although the product differences did not match differences in the students' composing processes in immediately obvious ways, a basic process of synthesizing does appear to be involved. (Given the small number of subjects in this study and the necessarily artificial protocol-gathering environment, the process will be presented more as an informed set of descriptions than as predictions for all student writers.)

A successful synthesis process, for this task at least, seems to begin with a vision of the final product--a set of expectations about the task (i.e., the processes of working with written sources) and the final product (e.g., a generic term paper); an experienced writer may bring such expectations to the task. This vision, although not explicit in Dan's, Sam's or Pat's protocols, was articulated in the taped interview of another case study student, Brad. Brad said that he came to the sources expecting to weave them smoothly together into an essay; when he realized that the disparate nature of the sources prevented him from finding a unifying concept for the essay, he felt quite dismayed and unsure of how to proceed (cf. Kantz, 1987a, 1987b).

Sometime early in the composing process, the writers interpreted the specific task. Interpretation began when the students read the task instructions; how long it continued seemed to depend on the student. Pat seems to have decided almost immediately what she was supposed to do; Brad said in his cued recall that he did not finally decide what he was doing until he had read most of the texts (Brad's essay received the highest general impression rating); and Sam worked out his interpretation of the task during his writing, as he made decisions about doing the task. Early task interpretation seems to have facilitated an efficient writing process, but does not seem clearly linked to essay quality.

What does seem clearly linked to essay quality, however, is the goals that writers set for themselves during task interpretation. For this task, students needed to realize that the rhetorical problem could not be solved either by summarizing the sources or by writing a personal essay.

After reading the task, the students read the sources, looking for usable material (e.g., Sam). As they read, some writers generated pieces of their final text (e.g., Pat) and ideas for using the sources (e.g., Dan). Making decisions about what to use early in the synthesizing process and writing down ideas generated by interacting with the

sources may well be tied to essay quality: Dan made no selections and ended up writing a comprehensive summary.

Selection seems to have been done on a strictly personal basis--what the students liked, what they thought was interesting or true, what stimulated their thoughts. At no time in any protocol did any writer make any statement along the lines of, "What a great idea for this audience! They really need to hear that." This phenomenon may have been an artifact of the task, which specified that the audience had already read the sources. However, later in the composing process, as students organized and wrote, they seemed to select or reject material according to whether they thought it was good and could figure out how to use it, rather than according to how they thought their readers would respond to it.

The most important aspect of the selection process seemed to be that as the successful writers selected material, they began thinking about it in the context of the task rather than trying to learn it or reproduce it. Thinking about the material in the context of the writing task seems unrelated to reading behaviors: Dan bounced ideas off the sources throughout his reading but never (except for his note on Leo) engaged personally with the material when planning or writing, while Sam struggled to master the source material during his first reading and eventually reorganized and translated it for his readers. Pat translated it virtually without overt critical reading. For this task, thinking about the source material in the context of the task could occur at any time--during reading, or as a separate planning stage before writing, or overlapping the reading/planning writing stages.

How to "think about the material" seemed to be unique for each writer, and much of it may have occurred below a level of thought that could be reached by the think-aloud protocol method. It seemed to include any kind of personal response, as long as the response occurred within the context of the task situation. Over and over again, the protocols show the writers defining the task, reading a piece of material, generating a note (usually a paraphrase) or a chunk of prose, and moving on to the next bit of text. "Thinking about" the material thus appears to mean applying it to the task and using it to solve the rhetorical problem. This application apparently occurred twice--when the material was selected and again during writing, at the moment when the writer decided that it was time to put a bit of source material into the draft and had to make a set of decisions on exactly how to present it.

This set of decisions was sometimes simplified by decisions made during the earlier thinking. Pat's strategy of writing response/paraphrases as she read the sources meant that most of her presentation problems were solved before she began her draft; she needed only to fit her prose pieces into an outline and develop a draft. Sam made simple plans about presenting the material as he reread the sources (e.g., "I can almost just copy this out" [Writing 2, p. 1]); he then "thought about" the material again as he used his outline to write the text. Using his outline and notes as a stimulus, Sam, like Dan, seems to have generated much of his essay at the moment of composition.

As for the students' original ideas, they seem (except for Pat's) to have been largely generated during writing. Those created during reading, such as Dan's note about writer's block, usually appeared in the draft, sometimes in striking contrast to the relatively uninspired presentation of other material (Dan's treatment of writer's block is clearly the most original part of his paper). Since original ideas were highly valued by the raters, the ability to develop them early may assist essay quality. Developing original ideas means, of course, that the writer must recognize these ideas *when they come* as being potentially valuable and useful.

During draft-writing, when a moment of decision arrived for using a particular (already-selected) bit of material, the writers would match the bit of material and the plan (if any) for its use to their developing text, in the context of their overall purpose, and figure out what else needed to be said. Usually they generated their prose with little difficulty, producing whole passages with little revision.

Thinking about the material included deciding how to organize it; after reading the sources and selecting material, all of the writers made decisions about organization. The decision about using the sources in an essay format or a process order seems to have had less impact on quality, however, than did decisions about what to do with the material--whether to transform it into an original argument, or explain it, or list its main points. Crucial decisions about selection seem always to have been made before decisions about organization.

Although writing a draft is often presented in writing texts as a separate stage of the composing process, between planning and revising, for this task a draft-writing stage could occur at almost any time in the composing process. It could be done separately from selection and organizing, as with Sam, or it could begin when the students began reading their texts, as with Pat, or it could include organizational planning, as with Dan. Late in their protocols, all of the students produced a draft, and in all cases the end of draft-production signalled completion of the task.

Synthesizing as a Process of Decisions and Goals, Not of Stages

In this description of synthesizing processes, the words "step" and "stage" have been carefully avoided because, although the writers all engaged in the same kinds of activities, they did them in different combinations and in different orders. Instead of describing the synthesizing process as a set of stages, as is often done in traditionally-oriented composition textbooks, it seems more appropriate to think of activities that were emphasized at certain times. This description supports that of Flower and Hayes (1980), of writing as a juggling routine for reducing "the number of demands being made on conscious attention" (p. 32).

The difference in process between writers of highly-rated and low-rated essays may be that the writers of highly-rated essays found a way to harmonize their task goals with their writing processes. A good synthesizer who found the task easy combined processes and worked efficiently, yet still broke the task up so as not to have to make too many decisions at once. Pat, for instance, made an outline after reading her sources and writing much of her text. Sam, who found the task difficult, broke it up into many pieces (e.g., two readings of each source text). This conclusion must be tentatively offered, however, since the study offers no clear-cut example of a writer who created a clear set of goals for the paper early in the reading/composing process but who had trouble writing a paper.

The composing processes described in this paper could be characterized as "top-down": That is, they are affected more by the writers' plans and decisions, especially decisions taken early in the process, than by discoveries made as the synthesizers do their reading and writing. Decisions that seemed easier to change, such as text format, tended to be made later in the process than decisions that affected basic strategies of presentation, such as how to talk to the readers. This view of synthesizing implies that it consists of a set of decisions, each of which constrains other, later decisions. The decisions can be made even before the writer begins working, as with Brad's initial expectation that he would write an essay, and they can be made, seemingly,

in almost any order. These decisions consist of defining the problem, deciding on a rhetorical stance, choosing source material, deciding how to use the source material, and planning the organization and format of the new text. These decisions are shown below in Figure 1.

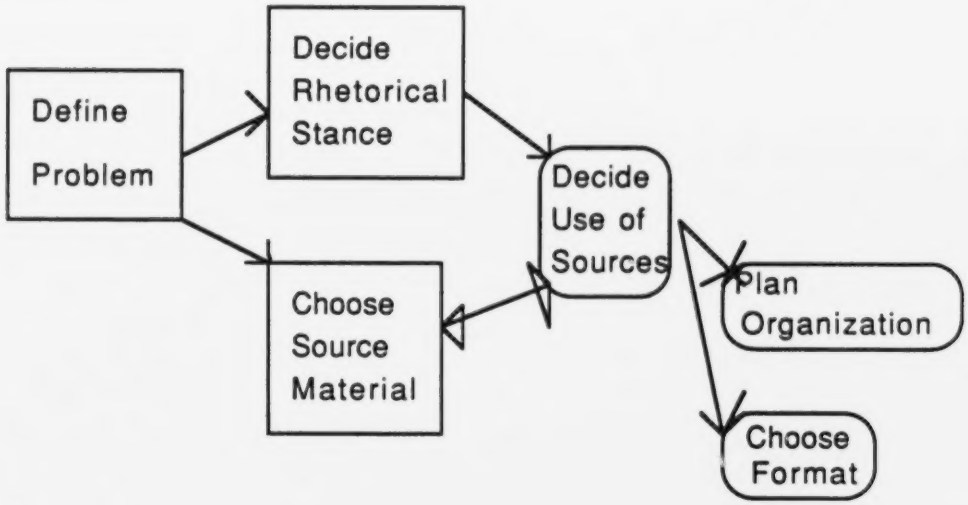

Figure 1: Decisions Made During Synthesizing

For successful writing, these decisions must be made; if they are not made consciously, they are made by default. For example, if a writer does not bring to the task a decision about how the source material will be handled, and if he neglects to decide how he will present the material to the readers, he may well end up writing a paper like Dan's, in which the writer disappears into the material, his ideas are presented as if they came from the sources, and the sources' advice is presented as an incoherent list of instructions. A writer who does not choose specific source material may end up having to use everything he finds.

The early decisions constrain the later ones. Pat, for example, appears to have assumed that the task required or allowed her to tell her readers her beliefs about using emotion as a source of creative ideas. This decision allowed her to be very selective about her source material--and, in fact, she relied on only one source, Macrorie, although she used ideas from four other sources. Her interpretation of the task also allowed her to respond to the material as she selected it, by writing the comments and paraphrases that ultimately made up two-thirds of her text. This mode of response implied an essay format. Thus, when Pat had finished reading and commenting, the only major decision left was how to organize the ideas. Pat's synthesizing process can be diagrammed as follows:

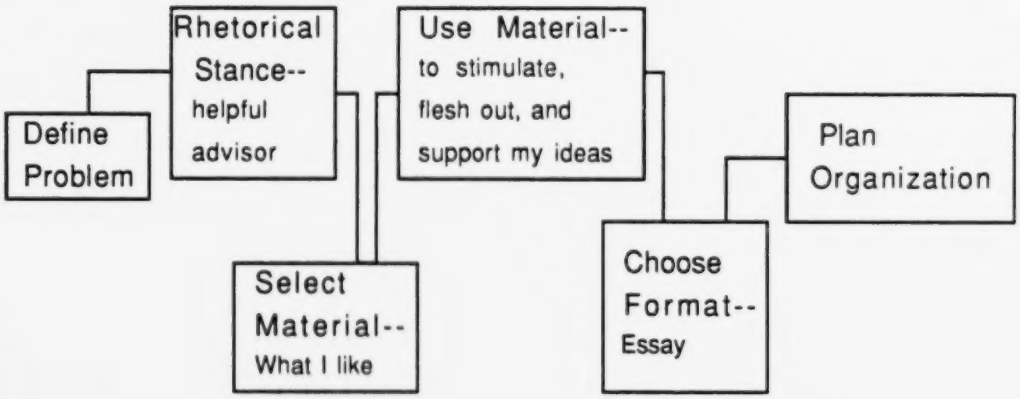
Define Problem
Rhetorical Stance-- helpful advisor
Use Material-- to stimulate, flesh out, and support my ideas
Plan Organization
Select Material-- What I like
Choose Format-- Essay

Figure 2: Pat's Synthesizing Process

As these diagrams show, although a synthesizing process necessarily begins with some sort of problem definition, other decisions can be made earlier or later in the process.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This description of synthesizing process suggests that writers have considerable freedom in how they structure their task, as long as they set themselves appropriate goals and use them to direct their work. Appropriate goals should probably include expectations of selecting source material, as opposed to wholesale quoting or paraphrasing, and using it, as opposed to simply reproducing it. In this study, writers of the most successful essays defined the writing problem as requiring original thought about the topic and sources, set rhetorical goals that required interpretation (not reproduction) of sources, and used their reading time to select source material and plan its use.

As for the influence of the task on composing process and written product, the rhetorical nature of the task appeared to exert some influence on the essays; for example, Pat decided to use the imperative mode, and all three writers directly addressed their readers. The task also appeared to affect writers' decisions about using the sources, in that no writer, even Dan, wrote summaries of all eight sources. Sam made a focussed presentation of each source; Dan summarized the advice offered in five sources and transformed the content of three others into advice. Overall, successful essays gave relevant advice in a developed form, defined the key term, blended original material with source material, used an appropriate essay structure, and presented the advice in a step-by-step manner so that readers could use it. Unsuccessful essays tended not to have these characteristics. This result suggests that writers of successful essays, like Pat and Sam, applied their original responses to the rhetorical problem. They used the rhetorical constraints of the task as a guide for blending original thought with source material, so as to mediate between the sources and their readers. Dan, by contrast, used his original ideas as a *substitute* for source material.

Within these very broad outlines, however, the students showed considerable variation in how they interpreted the task and what kind of paper they wrote. They were

free to use few or all of the sources and to build their essays around the sources or to subordinate the sources to their own arguments. They did not even need to cite the sources.

These findings suggest that having a rhetorically structured task may have helped the students to write better papers than they might have written without such guidelines. Sam's protocol, for example, shows that he would probably have felt unable to substitute his opinions about researched writing for those of Perry. The findings also suggest that, for this task, the key to success was finding an approach that gave the students a rhetorical perspective on the sources and thus allowed them to think of original and appropriate things to say.

Because writers of successful essays in this study behaved more like Atlas' professional writers than like his freshmen (Atlas, 1979), the study offers cause for optimism among writing teachers. It supports the goal-directed rhetorical methods recommended in such writing textbooks as Flower (1983) and Lauer, Montague, Lunsford, and Emig (1985). It suggests than an emphasis in the classroom on originality and creative thinking might help students to write successful syntheses, especially if students are encouraged to test their ideas against those of other authors in the context of a rhetorical problem.

APPENDIX A: TEXTS

The advice packet contains eight texts:

Flower, L. (1985). Case study of Kate: Defining a research question. *Problem-solving strategies for writing* (pp. 221-224). 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich. (Written for college freshmen, the case study uses the example of a girl trying to write an interesting and original research paper to advise that students apply their research material to a problem or issue, talking about the material rather than repeating it. [rated *3rd most relevant source* for the task]. 1220 words, 3 pp.)

Kerouac, J. (1958). Essentials of spontaneous prose. *Evergreen Review, 2*, #5, 72-73. (Written for creative writers in a stream-of-consciousness style that imitates the rhythms of jazz, Kerouac advises writing in an improvisatory manner without revision on a subject of immediate concern to the writer. [rated *least relevant source*]. 606 words, 2 pp.)

Leo, J. (1982). Beating writer's block: How to confront the typewriter fearlessly. In J. Wyrick (Ed.), *Discovering ideas: An anthology for writers* (pp. 320-322). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. (Written for readers of *Time*, this mock dramatization of a writer experiencing writer's block seems intended more to amuse than to explain psychological theories about the causes and cures of blocking. [rated *next-to least relevant source*]. 744 words, 3 pp.)

Macrorie, K. (1985). Telling truths. In P. Escholz and A. Rosa (Eds.), *Subject and strategy: A rhetoric reader* (3rd ed., pp. 570-576). New York: St. Martin's Press. (Written for adults who feel intimidated about having to write, the article uses examples of children's speech and students' writing to argue that the best prose tells personal truths in vivid, un-self-conscious language. [rated *2nd most relevant source].* 1355 words, 4 pp.)

Pattison, J. (1982). How to write an "F" paper: Fresh advice for students of freshman English. In J. Wyrick (Ed.), *Discovering ideas: An anthology for writers* (pp. 317-318). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. (Written for teachers of freshman writing, the article lists frequent faults of student essays, sarcastically recommending them as good advice for freshmen, and enacts the faults in the advice (e.g., advice to use sentence fragments is written in the form of sentence fragments). [rated *6th most relevant source*, i.e., not very relevant]. 770 words, 3 pp.)

Perry, W.G. (1977). Examsmanship and the liberal arts: A study in educational epistemology. In *The Norton Reader* (pp. 227-233). 4th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (Written for Harvard faculty, the article uses an anecdote about a student writing an A- essay for a course he had never taken to discuss the problem of how course grades reward rote learning ("cow") and punish original creative thought ("bull"). [rated *most relevant source*]. 1855 words, 6 pp.)

Swift, M.H. (1973). Clear writing means clear thinking means . . . *Harvard Business Review, 51*, 59-62. (Written for business managers, the article uses an anecdote about a typical business situation to show how to write good audience-based memos and to argue for revising as a way to clarify thinking. [rated *5th most relevant source*, i.e., of medium relevance]. 1978 words, 7 pp.)

Vonnegut, K. (1983). How to write with style. In D. McQuade and R. Atwan (Eds.), *Thinking in Writing* (2nd ed., pp. 353-359). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. (Written for a general audience of insecure would-be writers, the article equates original style with individuality, advising writers to choose topics of personal interest and to use their natural, familiar language. [rated *5th most relevant source,* i.e., of medium relevance]. 1348 words, 4 pp.)

Appendix B: WRITING TASK

You are an aide at the school's Peer Help Center. You find yourself being frequently asked for help by engineers, chemists, and other science majors who, to fulfill their University Core Writing Requirement, have enrolled in writing courses that demand a lot of creative writing. This is a typical complaint: "The teacher wants us to be creative--but I don't know what he means by 'creative.' He has us keep a journal of our thoughts. So I write down things like this:

> Sept. 15, hot day. Classes as usual; physics more boring than ever. I wish they would get teachers who could speak English. He couldn't even answer a simple question about vectors. If I go to the party tomorrow I'll have to stay up all night tonight doing calculus. Tried to get up a tennis game with Joe, but he had a lab report due.
>
> He hates my journals! He says they aren't 'creative'--whatever that is. In two weeks I've got to turn in a short story, and I can't even write a journal. What should I do?

Some of these students have brought with them a packet of readings that their teacher has distributed. They say that, according to the teacher, this packet contains material that will help them, but they can't find it. Your boss has given you a copy of the packet; she wants you to use it to write a handout that will help students with this problem.

Write a fairly complete but rough draft of the handout. Use the best ideas from the packet in your paper; you need not use footnotes, but do cite your sources within your paper. You will have two hours in which to write the paper, although you may not need that much time.

You may mark on your copy of the packet if you wish.

Feel free to make changes as you write. However, in making changes, please do not black out or erase your original words; just draw a line through them.

APPENDIX C: STUDENTS' ESSAYS

The students' formatting has been replicated as much as possible; spelling and other minor mechanical errors have been corrected.

DAN'S ESSAY

Everything you always wanted to know about Creativity but were afraid to ask.
*Find an interesting topic and describe it naturally.

- Do not ever stray too far from your subject lest you not be able to find your way back.
- Sound like yourself in your writing.
- Do not write what you think the reader wants to hear, but write that which you wish to communicate.
- Pity the readers, because they must read the stuff you write.
- Your paper, journal, or what have you should be interesting to you as well as to others. After all, if it's boring material then it will seem to take forever to write, and the pain of reading it will be excruciating.

(excerpted from *How to Write with Style*,
by Kurt Vonnegut

*Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

- Write what you feel.
- Take note from little kids who almost always write uninhibitedly because they are not as self-conscious of their work as adults are.
- There is no point in writing lies, because if you can't even believe what you write, then surely you cannot expect others to believe what they read.

(excerpted from *Telling Truths*,
by Ken Macrorie)

*If writer's block attacks you, then do not despair.

- Follow these simple instructions:
  If writer's block does not occur often, then perhaps a little time away from the paper will help. Watch the tube, grab a brew, or just plain go crazy for a little bit - allowing your mental muscles time off to relax. Then, start again fresh.
- If the symptoms of writer's block persist, then do not, I repeat DO NOT, follow the above procedure. Instead, face your fear head on. NO DISTRACTIONS ALLOWED.
- Once you start something, you must finish it. There will always be the chance for revision later.

(excerpted from *Beating Writer's Block:
How to Confront the Typewriter Fearlessly*,
by John Leo

*Be spontaneous: Short, sweet, and to the point.

- Do not attempt to revise until a draft is fully written; otherwise, you might never get past the first page.
- Pick up actions and conversations at interesting points.
- There is no need to show the dull, boring "build-up" to the important event or dialogue.

(excerpted from *Clear Writing Means Clear Thinking Means . . .*,
by Marvin H. Swift)

*Be a cross-bred "Bull" and "Cow"

- "Bulling" is writing lots of relevancies without general data.
- "Cowing" is writing lots of data without specific relevancies.
- Neither pure "bulling" nor pure "cowing" should be aspired to, but rather, a cross between the two: Be both specific and general proportional to your own wise discretion.

(excerpted from *Examsmanship and the Liberal Arts: A Study in Educational Epistemology*,
by William G. Perry, Jr.)

*However, if you still want to write an "F" paper:

- Select a topic big enough to let you wander around it without ever actually having to state it.
- Pad your paper with lots of stuff--anything to make it longer.
- Change tenses in your paper as often as you can--particularly in the same paragraph.
- Begin new paragraphs every other sentence--this makes your paper look longer which impresses teachers.
- Fill sentences with meaningless "deadwood" and use as many fragments and run-on sentences as you possibly can--to keep the reader interested and on his toes.
- Inject humor into your paper by deliberately capitalizing words which should not be capitalized, and deliberately using wrong words in place of those which make sense.
- Lastly, conclude your paper with a nice, homey cliche such as "(to) put a little frosting on the cake . . ."

(excerpted from *How to Write an "F" Paper: Fresh Advice for Students of Freshman English*,
by Joseph C. Pattison)

All of this is by no means an assurance that creative juices will flow; however, it is surely a firm step in the right direction.

One must remember, creativity is a skill as old as the hills and one which anybody can master. The only requirement is a desire to learn.

SAM'S ESSAY

INTRODUCTION:

This is a handout designed for science majors. In this handout you will find a shortened, distilled approach to writing creatively. Not that this will "teach" you to write creatively, but it does contain some ideas that will help you bring out your best writing skills.

PROCEDURE:

I. PICK A TOPIC

First you should select a topic for your paper. In selecting a topic choose one that you either have an interest for or experience in. This will make your paper more interesting and of higher quality.

If you have trouble coming up with a suitable subject, try "free writing." This is a method in which you, free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation constraints, write whatever comes to your mind. A writer can use this as a method of letting his thoughts and impressions actually flow without rethinking. This allows very basic and often overlooked ideas to surface. Although the writing itself is unusable, some part of it may be the creative start you were looking for. *JACK KEROUAC

II. ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS

There are many different ways in which a writer can put his ideas into a structure he can communicate from. One way is to simply write an out line. The outline form can give you a fairly clear idea of the order in which you need to express your thoughts. A second method is to block similar ideas and then check to see how they fit together. A third approach is to actually begin writing the prose for the supporting ideas in your paper. By placing your thoughts down at such as early stage in the writing process, you are forced to rethink and justify as you go. This circular process of writing and rethinking can aid you in determining a structure for your paper. Remember no one of these is necessarily correct for you. You may find that a combination of these methods works best for you.

III. BEFORE YOU START WRITING

When you begin the actual writing, remember that there are some fundamental do's and don't's that should be kept in mind.

1. Confine Topic: Don't be too broad
2. NO wandering around: stay on track
3. Don't pad, restate, or point out repetition
4. Use a consistent structure
5. Don't lead into sentences with ornate and complex structures
6. NO fragments, run-on's, or comma splices
7. Don't invert sentences
8. Don't use cute little phrases
9. Don't ramble. *JOSEPH PATTISON

IV. Beginning the Writing

Graders of written papers look for not simply a regurgitation of the facts that you have learned, but for evidence of your application of them through your own thinking. You should use "the material in the course to support your own thinking." Linda Flower

After you have made your own conclusions, you need to back them up. This is often the point at which students make the decision to induce facts or supporting data in a disproportionate way. If too many facts are used, the impression of covering up a lack of understanding is given to the grader. If your conclusions are not backed up, though, an equally bad taste will be left in the grader's mouth. There is a point between these two extremes where your paper must fall.

Writing is a way for you to take your rough ideas and massage them into lean, succinct thoughts. If you express your thoughts in a system where the nature of the process itself forces your ideas into an order, then they can be analyzed. Placing your words down on paper provides just such an ordering system. Don't stop the moment your writing becomes unclear. Use it to sort out your thought, then go back and revise it.

At some point, stop and read your work. If it seems uninteresting, or second rate, you may need to rethink the approach to the topic you have selected.

If you find that you don't have any real interest in your subject, look for another. An important element in your paper is the degree of communication you have achieved. When you write about things in your own experience, you can relate them in a far broader and deeper way. The "truth" or "sincerity" in your paper can be felt. *KEN MACRORIE

Society shapes almost every aspect of our lives. From the way we speak, dress, and behave to the way we write. As we mature, our writing style becomes duller and less creative. Society has impressed a standard on us. This skill is not lost, simply long unused. When you write creatively, try to avoid patterns, and focus on communicating. One last suggestion. "If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out." *KURT VONNEGUT This gives you an easy rule-of-thumb to follow when you revise. Oftentimes your paper will contain well-constructed sentences that sound good to the ear, but add nothing worthwhile. These should be removed.

GOOD LUCK.

PAT'S ESSAY

There are no 'right and wrong' guidelines for 'being creative.' An effective piece of creative writing is one that is interesting and unique to both you and your reader. The content and ideas are formed by a 'delicate balance' of internal and external influences. Achieving this balance is difficult, however, when it is reached you will have a successful piece of 'creative' work.

No feeling or event is too shocking when you want to be original and creative. It is the candid moments which enhance writing. To just relay good/bad/positive/negative reactions makes a work flat. Feelings should be described graphically, drawing a picture for your reader. Create your own similes and metaphors when describing something. A reaction like noticing 'Rice Krispies as doing a dead man's float' (Telling Truths, pg. 2), possesses a childlike quality. Do not dismiss such a thought in order to sound more concise like 'Rice Krispies are soggy.' Facts do not always impress or enhance the paper. Rhetorical statements and questions may become offensive and boring. Try to illustrate your ideas with active images.

Images should come from an undisturbed flow from the mind (Kerouac, pg. 1). Don't be afraid of opening up and using personal accounts to relay an experience or idea. Include descriptive words that will make the subject or action come alive on the page. Write in an uninhibited, swift manner form the center of your thought, out to its periphery.

One of the main difficulties a creative writer encounters is in wording phrases. Try to be concise yet effective, because every word counts. Avoid generalizations and ambiguities and try to show how your thoughts link together. It is not necessary to put your vocabulary on exhibition (Telling Truths, pg. 6). It is easy, however, to get caught up in the search for the 'right' word or words. Yet, it is essential not to abandon your first instincts about an idea. These first notions are a representation of you, and are usually most interesting. Oftentimes a build-up of words may create an effective rhythm better than any one word can relay (Kerouac pg. 2). In other cases the use of minimal language strengthens the impact of the idea.

Subjects for writing should be out of a genuine concern from the writer. Do not begin with a preconceived idea about what to say, but from your center of interest at the moment of writing (Kerouac, pg. 2). There are a number of places to find an interesting variety of subjects. Draw in part from memory, tracing past experiences, for change your scenery and surroundings. A small variation of your habits or events may open up a whole new realm for ideas. A conscious search will inevitably lead you to new subjects, and may also help to avoid a writer's block.

Although there is no recipe for creativity, there are some things to stay clear of. Cliches and repetition make a paper uninteresting. The creative writer always looks for fresh, new approaches. The writer wants to make each idea stand strongly on its own. As the writer, these decisions are yours and will lead to a unique, original content that constitutes a work 'creative.'

LIST OF SOURCES

Atlas, M. (1979). Expert-novice differences in the writing process. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. (Educational Document Reproduction Service ED 170 769.)

Booth, W.C. (1963). The rhetorical stance. *College Composition and Communication, 14,* 139-145.

Carey, L. (1985). *Statistics for protocol analysis.* Unpublished manuscript.

Ford, J.E., & Perry, D.R. (1982). Research paper instruction in the undergraduate writing program. *College English, 44* (8), 825-831.

Flower, L. (1979). Writer-based prose: A cognitive basis for problems in writing. *College English, 41,* 19-37.

Flower, L. (1985). *Problem-solving strategies for writing* (2nd ed.). New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J.R. (1980). The dynamics of composing: Making plans and juggling constraints. In L.W. Gregg & E.R. Steinberg (Eds.), Cognitive processes in writing (pp. 31-50). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kantz, M. (1987a). *Composing from textual sources: Rhetorical stances for writing syntheses.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Carnegie Mellon.

Kantz, M. (1987b). *The relationship of synthesizing rhetorical stance to essay quality.* Unpublished technical report. University of California at Berkeley: The Center for the Study of Writing.

Kennedy, M.L. (1985). The composing process of college students writing from sources. *Written Communication, 2* (4), 434-456.

Lauer, J.M., Montague, G., Lunsford, A., & Emig, J. (1985). *Four worlds of writing* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Spivey, N.N. (1983). *Discourse synthesis: Constructing texts in a reading and writing.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Texas, Austin.

Toulmin, S.E. (1969). *The uses of argument.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL
The Center for the Study of Writing

Chair
Fred Hechinger
The New York Times Foundation

Alonzo Crim
Professor of Urban Educational Leadership
Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA

Sister Regina Noel Dunn
Teacher
Villa Maria Academy, Malvern, PA

Marcia Farr
Associate Professor of English
University of Illinois, Chicago, IL

Abraham Glassman
Chairman
Connecticut State Board of Education

Bill Honig
California Superintendent
of Public Instruction

The Honorable Gary K. Hart
California State Senator

Sibyl Jacobson
Executive Director
Metropolitan Life Foundation

John Maxwell
Exeutive Director
National Council of Teachers of English

Roy Peña
Principal
Andrews High School, El Paso, TX

Carol Tateishi
Teacher
Ross Elementary School, Kentfield, CA

Richard C. Wallace, Jr.
Pittsburgh Superintendent of Schools
and Secretary, Board of Education